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French seek bombers of Greenpeace

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SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

PARIS — President Francois Mitterrand yesterday ordered an investigation into allegations that French secret service officials hired the people who bombed the Greenpeace flagship Rainbow Warrior.

The major scandal that has erupted here involves a number of shadowy cloak-and-dagger figures from France's leading espionage service — the DSGE, or Direction Generale de la Securite Exterieure, the French equivalent of the CIA.

They are being accused of having masterminded the mysterious blowing-up in the New Zealand port of Auckland of the Rainbow Warrior — a 150-foot trawler, which a group of ecologically minded pacifists from the Greenpeace movement had bought to take part in a South Pacific cruise designed to protest the continuing use of the Polynesian atoll of Mururoa for the underground testing of French nuclear bombs.

Ripped by two explosions — now thought to have been caused by 40-pound plastic charges placed against the trawler's hull by underwater frogmen — the Rainbow Warrior was disabled and partly sunk on the night of July 10.

Eleven of the 12-man crew managed to scurry out of their bunks and on to the shore after the first blast, but a 12th — Portuguese-born Dutch crewman and photographer Armando Pereira, was killed by the second explosion.

Not long thereafter the New Zealand police arrested a French-speaking couple, Alain-Jacques, 34, and Sophie-Claire Turenge, 36, who upon examination were found to be the bearers of stolen Swiss passports. They have been charged with homicide and arson.

Particularly incriminating was the discovery of a frogman's oxygen tank and a gray-and-white inflatable dinghy which the perpetrators of the crime were careless enough to abandon on a nearby beach.

For some time, Alan Galbraith, head of New Zealand's police force, has been reported to be convinced of French complicity in this mysterious bombing. But yesterday reports of such an involvement were given full-scale exposure in Paris with the simultaneous publication in two weeklies of articles directly linking the Rainbow Warrior blasts to French secret service agents.

According to a story published in VSD, Sophie-Claire Turenge holds the rank of captain in the French secret service. It claims that a DSGE colonel named Codet (or Mandion, another code name) was entrusted some months ago with the task of "neutralizing" the Rainbow Warrior when it was learned that it had been fitted out with electronic equipment designed to measure the parameters involved in a neutron bomb test.

The colonel is reported to have engaged several commando units for the "neutralizing" job. The first, a four-man group led by a skipper named Alain Veche, set sail from the New Caledonian capital of Noumea on June 10 in a hired yacht equipped with sophisticated radio sets for maintaining long-distance contact with other groups.

The yacht is reported to have anchored off New Zealand's northern coast. After that, several members of the commando force transported the explosives overland to Auckland in a rented delivery van.

The yacht later put in at an East Australian port, where (at the request of the New Zealand authorities) it was subjected to police and customs inspection. On July 17 it set sail for New Caledonia, never to be seen again — probably because it was scuttled by the occupants, who were rescued by another cloak-and-dagger outfit according to a well-planned James Bond-style scenario.

An almost identical story, published in the Paris weekly, L'Evenement du Jeudi, identifies the DSGE "chief of operations" as being a certain Colonel C.

In a last-minute effort to head off the inevitable diplomatic repercussions, President Francois Mitterrand on Wednesday evening dictated a brief letter to Premier Laurent Fabius instructing him to have a "rigorous inquiry opened without delay." The text of the letter was made public at 1 a.m. — around midday, New Zealand time in an obvious effort to placate the government in Wellington, which had just dispatched several police inspectors to Paris with what has been described as a "devastating" dossier.

A few hours later, Prime Minister Fabius let it be known that he had named Bernard Tricot to head the administration investigation into the affair.

The choice of Mr. Tricot is not likely to improve the present French government's often strained relations with the French army's top brass or with its espionage service.

Appointed general secretary of the Defense Ministry by Gen. Charles de Gaulle in 1960, Mr. Tricot made himself many enemies among French army officers by purging officers suspected of being lukewarm to Gen. de Gaulle's policy of giving independence to Algeria.

Along with the head of Gen. de Gaulle's personal secret service, Jacques Foccart, Mr. Tricot was instrumental in establishing a parallel network of espionage and counterespionage informants owing loyalty to the Elysee Palace — agents who earned for themselves the scornful nickname of "barbouzes" (bearded ones).

In its afternoon edition yesterday, the influential daily Le Monde suggested that the man who masterminded the Rainbow Warrior bombing was probably a certain Jean-Francois Charrier, a one-time DSGE colonel who has long concerned himself with French Polynesia.

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